United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Secretary-General says he is "disappointed" that European Community has been unable so far to solve conflict in Yugoslavia.

◆ Security Council extends mandate of United Nations Observer Group in Central America until 30 April 1992.

◆ General Assembly concludes debate on United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance.

◆ Secretary-General reports that cease-fire in Angola has been "well respected" by both sides since it took effect over five months ago.

◆ Day of Solidarity With Detained United Nations Staff is observed at Headquarters.

◆ Economic and Financial Committee approves draft welcoming joint Ghana/World Health Organization initiative to hold international forum on health, in Accra.

◆ Secretary-General renews his appeal to Government of Myanmar to release 1991 Nobel Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said this morning that he was disappointed that the European Community had not been able so far to solve the conflict in Yugoslavia.

He made the comment when asked by correspondents if the United Nations were to play a greater role, now that the Yugoslav parties had refused to accept the European Peace Plan.

In reply to another question, the Secretary-General said that his Personal Envoy, Cyrus Vance, was now in Yugoslavia to gather information and

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to try to assist the European Community in its peace efforts. He emphasized that only the Security Council has authority to apply sanctions against Yugoslavia.

A United Nations spokesman said today that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar had received a report from Mr. Vance regarding his meetings with various leaders in Yugoslavia. Mr. Vance would spend today in Belgrade and leave tomorrow for Budapest, Vienna and Rome, capitals of three neighbouring countries. On Friday, Mr. Vance would go to the Vatican for a meeting with the Pope, after which he would travel to Paris. Mr. Vance was expected to be back in New York on Saturday to report to the Secretary-General.

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The Security Council this morning voted unanimously to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) until 30 April 1992.

The Council took that action by adopting resolution 719 (1991), by which it also approved the Secretary-General report on the Observer Group's activities for the past six months.

ONUCA, which was established in November 1989 to monitor specific security commitments made by the five Central American Governments under the Esquipulas II Agreements, has now had its mandate renewed four times. In once again renewing the mandate, the Council emphasized the need "to continue to monitor expenditures carefully during this period of increasing demands on peace-keeping resources".

In line with that concern over expenditures, the Council asked the Secretary-General to report to the Council within three months, taking account of any developments in the region which indicate that ONUCA's size or future should be reconsidered.

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The General Assembly completed yesterday its debate on strengthening United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance, hearing calls for reform, including proposals to improving the efficiency of the Organization through the establishment of an emergency fund. Speakers also called for the appointment of a high-level Coordinator to help speed up the Organization's response to humanitarian emergencies.

Among those addressing the Assembly, the representative of the United States, Jonathan Moore, asserted that reform and renewal of the United Nations humanitarian assistance activities should be an integral part of overall Secretariat reform, which he said was critically needed. The designation of a fund and the setting up of a Committee would not in itself "do the trick", he said.

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Other speakers expressed concern over the issue of State sovereignty, saying humanitarian assistance could be used as a pretext to disguise political intervention. The representative of Cuba, Carlos Fernandez de Cossio Dominguez, rejected any interpretation that implied a right to intervene in the internal affairs of States. He said the requirement of respect for the sovereignty of States was absolute and opposed any global practice of "limited sovereignty".

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The Secretary-General reports that the cease-fire in Angola has been well respected by both sides since it took effect over five months ago. The arrangements for the cease-fire were spelled out in the Peace Accords for Angola, reached in May between the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

In a report to the Security Council of 31 October on the United Nations Verification Mission in Angola (UNAVEM II), covering the period 31 May to 25 October, the Secretary-General said that the cease-fire provided a sound basis for implementation of all the other provisions of the Peace Accords. However, he said, the two parties had only partly complied with the Peace Accords' provisions relating to the assembly of troops. That situation undermined confidence, the Secretary-General said, and could endanger other aspects of the Peace Accords.

As for the possible role of the United Nations in forthcoming elections in Angola, no decision has yet been taken by the Angolan authorities to request the Organization to provide technical assistance or electoral observers. There were, however, the Secretary-General reported, strong indications of a growing consensus in Angola that the United Nations should be involved.

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The United Nations was commemorating today the International Day of Solidarity with detained United Nations staff. According to the United Nations Staff Union, there are currently more than one hundred staff members imprisoned around the world.

With the theme "When one of us is imprisoned, none of us is free", the Day of Solidarity featured as guest speaker Middle East correspondent Charles Glass, who was taken hostage in Lebanon four years ago, but managed to escape from captivity.

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The General Assembly's Second Committee (Economic and Financial) has approved a draft resolution in support of the initiative taken by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Ghana to hold an International Forum on Health in Accra this December.

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Approved without a vote, the draft would have the Assembly invite Member States, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to support the Forum, at which special consideration would be given to improving the health and economic situation of vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially women in developing countries.

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The Secretary-General's Spokesman told correspondents today that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, during a meeting this morning with the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, had appealed on humanitarian grounds for the restoration of freedom to 1991 Nobel Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

The spokesman said that the Secretary-General had also asked that her family be allowed to visit her, and had noted the widespread anxiety over the state of her health. The Ambassador of Myanmar had told the Secretary-General that "Mrs. Suu Kyi is in good health and free to leave the country if she decides to go into exile".

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